Ball, Thurmond Duel On State Censorship

Undersecretary of State Ball and Senator Thurmond, Democrat of South Carolina, waged a duel of words today over the State Department's censorship of speeches.

The occasion was a return engagement by Mr. Ball before a Special Armed Services subcommittee investigating charges that defense leaders have been "muzzled" in warning about the menace of communism.

With Senator Thurmond repeatedly voicing disagreement, Mr. Ball said the department's censors, with some exceptions, had "performed this delicate and sensitive responsibility with perception and judgment."

The Undersecretary specifically rejected any suggestion that the State Department has sought to discourage the use of the word "victory" and that this "reflects an ideological attitude of the department."

Pained by Explanation

In one such case Mr. Ball found himself pained not by the deletion of the word "victory" but by the explanation given for it by the State Department in a report submitted to the subcommittee last March 29.

In the speech in question the phrase "defeat of Communist aggression" had been substituted for the word "victory." The department's explanation to the subcommittee said the word "victory" has "a militaristic and aggressive ring" and "also implies an 'all-or-nothing' approach leaving no room for accommodation."

In an opening statement Mr. Ball said the explanation was "inartistically worded." He later described it as "fatuous, foolish, inarticulate, and inaccurate," and said, "I don't see why it was put in there."

Senator Thurmond said such words as "victory" were deleted from many speeches with the explanation that the use of such terms left no room for "accommodation."

Sees "No-Win" Policy

In a long series of statements prefacing his questions, the South Carolina Senator contended that such changes represented a "no-win" policy, saying that an "all or nothing" approach as expressed in many of the speeches apparently was inconsistent with State Department policy.

Senator Thurmond carried the battle of words outside the cess, commenting on Mr. Ball's testimony he said: "I think

he squirmed terribly and I don't think he was forthright."

Senator Thurmond's questions involving the State Department's position with regard to Laos became so detailed that Chairman Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, lifted a warning voice against discussing such matters in a public hearing.

"We don't help the cause of the United States by discussing what we're going to do in Laos," Senator Stennis said. He said he had heard discussions at the "highest possible level," including briefings by the Central Intelligence Agency, about the Laotian situation and said he was "seriously in doubt" in pursuing the matter except in a closed meeting.

Topic Called Sensitive

Mr. Ball referred to the situation in Laos as having "peculiar sensitivity" and said "only a minimum should be said in an open session."

The matter was passed over for a closed meeting, with Senator Thurmond pressing on to other examples of the department's changes and deletions in speeches.

The South Carolina Senator touched on a proposed 1960 speech by Gen. Thomas S. Power, commander of the Strategic Air Command, discussing the destructiveness of a nuclear war. Mr. Ball said he felt the speech would have been "contrary to our interests" and that it was "very desirable" that Gen. Power should not deliver it.

Senator Thurmond soon

memo to the speech in which the State Department censors explained that the word "victory" was deleted because it had a "militaristic and aggressive ring," which left no realm for "accommodation."

Meant for Security Forum

The speech was one that Brig. Gen. John W. White had proposed giving before the National Security Forum in Columbus, Ohio, on March 3, 1961.

Mr. Ball pointed out that the speech came at a time when President Kennedy was preparing for his Vienna conference with Soviet Premier Khrushchev. This led Senator Thurmond to inquire what "accommodations" the President was willing to make and what Mr. Khrushchev "might do for us."

"He (the President) wouldn't go over there and talk in general terms," Senator Thurmond said.

While saying that it would be "extremely unwise" to discuss the specific details of the conference, Mr. Ball said the President was prepared to make "only such accommodations" that would bring about "no diminution of our vital interests."

He said that while there are many areas of sharp conflict, there are some in which there can be an accommodation of the interests of this country and the Soviet Union. Austria was cited as one example.

Exact Language Read

In discussing the White speech, Mr. Ball read into the record the exact language of the explanatory memorandum which he said was submitted by the State Department reviewer to the Defense Department at the time the change of language was recommended. The memorandum read:

"Because this speech concerns predominantly the cold war, we have made several incidental changes of wording to reflect the fact that the cold war is instigated and promoted by aggressive international communism.

"We consider that it is necessary we insure this impression throughout because (1) the administration presently does not wish to give occasion for interpretation by foreign opinion that the United States is stimulating the cold war from its side and, thus, aggravating rather than trying to reduce international tensions, and

"(2) because sentences could be quoted out of context in support of the Soviet propaganda claim that elements of the United States military in particular are continuing to whip up the cold war fever."